

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS
(Section of the Library Association)

HON. EDITOR: T. I. M. CLULOW
(Leeds City Libraries)

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Announcements

WE regret to have to announce the resignation of the Hon. Secretary, Mr. James Revie, on account of his continued ill-health. Though every member of this Section, and, we feel sure, of the whole Library Association, will regret the necessity, none who have any knowledge of the difficulties under which Mr. Revie has increasingly laboured during a most trying period in the history of the A.A.L. would insist on a reconsideration of his decision, which has, indeed, already taken effect. As was emphasized at our last Annual Meeting, the burdens of office in the A.A.L. have become as much as may be borne by anyone enjoying the best of health. This boon Mr. Revie has not been granted. Almost from the day he assumed the Hon. Secretaryship, he has been dogged by illness, and from time to time prevented from carrying out his duties. He has continued the struggle against this great handicap for so long only from a deep sense of loyalty to the Association. Now that the difficulties of the past few years seem to have been resolved, he is anxious to take the rest which he has so well earned. We can only express the earnest hope, which we know every member will endorse, that, released from the cares of the Secretaryship, he may speedily enjoy a complete recovery, and perhaps be enabled to render the A.A.L. further service in some less onerous capacity than that of the office he has just laid down. Since his resignation has yet to come before the Council, we are deferring an appreciation of Mr. Revie's many great services to a subsequent issue of the journal.

Pending the decision of the Council at its September meeting, the Officers have persuaded the Hon. Treasurer to discharge the duties of the Secretaryship. For his ready assumption of this additional burden, the Officers are extremely grateful. Mr. Coult's task will be lightened if members and others will note that, until further notice, all communications that would formerly have been sent to Mr. Revie, should be addressed to Mr. D. E. Coult, F.L.A., Hon. Treasurer and Acting Hon. Secretary of the A.A.L., Central Library, Ilford, Essex. The Council will be asked to sanction the continuance of this arrangement until 31st December, 1938, so as to avoid the necessity for a by-election so soon before the annual election of Officers and Council.

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CLASSES IN LIBRARIANSHIP

The movement for the wider provision of courses of oral tuition for the Library Association Examinations continues to spread, and we are glad to draw students' attention to the particulars given below. Though details are not to hand as we go to press we believe that the classes held last year at Spring Grove Polytechnic, Isleworth, and the West Ham Municipal College will be continued, and we commend them to the attention of students in their respective areas. Nor should the classes organized by the School of Librarianship, University College, London, be forgotten.

CROYDON

Evening classes have been arranged at the Croydon Polytechnic for practising library assistants studying for the Library Association's Elementary and Intermediate Examinations, commencing Monday, 19th September.

ELEMENTARY Tuesdays, 7.30-9.30 p.m.
Lecturer: Mr. T. E. Callander, F.L.A.

INTERMEDIATE
Classification Mondays, 7.30-9.30 p.m.
Lecturer: Mr. D. H. Halliday, F.L.A.

Cataloguing Thursdays, 7.30-9.30 p.m.
Lecturer: Mr. H. A. Sharp, F.L.A.

Fees will be as follows: Elementary, 12s. 6d.; Intermediate Classification, 12s. 6d.; Intermediate Cataloguing, 12s. 6d.

Courses will be completed in time for students to present themselves at the May 1939 Examination of the Library Association. Enrolment forms may be obtained from the Principal, Croydon Polytechnic, Scarbrook Road, Croydon. Forms will also be available at Croydon, Coulsdon, and other neighbouring public libraries.

FULHAM

The following evening classes have been arranged at the Fulham Commercial Institute to meet the requirements of assistant librarians who are preparing for the Examinations conducted by the Library Association:

ELEMENTARY:
English Literary History. Tuesday, 8.30-9.30.
Classification, Cataloguing, and Accession Methods. Tuesday, 6.30-8.30.

INTERMEDIATE:
Library Classification. Friday, 7.30-9.30.
Cataloguing. Friday, 6.30-7.30.

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FINAL :

English Literary History. Evening to be fixed. 6.30-8.30.

General Bibliography and Book Selection, and Historical Bibliography.

Tuesday, 6.30-8.30.

Advanced Library Administration. Evening to be fixed. 6.30-8.30.

Lecturers Engaged : Miss N. Burton, M.A., F.L.A. ; Miss A. Deeley, M.A., F.L.A. Three others to be engaged.

Fees (for the full Course, September 1938 to June 1939) according to age. Minimum 5s., maximum 12s.

For further particulars apply to the Principal, the Fulham Commercial Institute, Childerley Street, Fulham, S.W.6.

LEEDS

Classes in librarianship will be organized at the Leeds College of Commerce for assistants in Leeds and district, in preparation for the May (1939) Examinations of the Library Association.

ELEMENTARY :

Tuesdays, 9.30-11.30 a.m. (commencing 20th September, 1938).

Tutor: Mr. E. C. Riley, F.L.A.

INTERMEDIATE :

Mondays (commencing 19th September, 1938).

Cataloguing (9.30-10.30 a.m.). *Tutor :* Mr. E. Hargreaves, F.L.A.

Classification (10.30-11.30 a.m.). *Tutor :* Mr. N. Walker, F.L.A.

FINAL :

Courses will be organized if there is sufficient demand.

Fees for each course will be : Registration fee, 1s. ; Course fee, £1.

Prospective students should send their names to the City Librarian, Central Library, Leeds, 1, not later than 10th September, stating which class they desire to join. Enrolment will be effected at the first meeting of each class.

We are asked to make it known to our readers that Members of the National Association of Local Government Officers are eligible for membership of the Group Theatre on the same terms as students of recognized colleges, viz. 7s. 6d. per annum, which entitles the member to a free 5s. seat at each production, and one guest ticket at the reduced price of 3s. Any number of further guest tickets may be purchased at the full price. Members are also entitled to free admission to all Group Theatre Lectures, Exhibitions, etc.

Genius and the Librarian¹

R. L. W. COLLISON

I HAVE in my possession an old and inaccurate dictionary which gives, as one of its definitions of "genius": "superior power of invention or origination of any kind." The definition is not in itself a very good explanation, but it will serve its purpose, for I want to discuss the relationship between the public library and this "superior power" as it exists to-day. Nor can this relationship be surveyed as directly as might be supposed; the subject has three aspects, and I propose to discuss:

1. The relationship of libraries to the man of genius;
2. The attitude of libraries to works of genius; and
3. The position of genius in the art of librarianship itself.

When I wrote this paper I found that subconsciously I had restricted the word "genius" to the meaning: "literary and artistic genius," and for this I feel I need make no apology. The difference between artistic and scientific genius I take to be the difference between a portrait and a photograph, and while there is scope for good and bad in each, their territories are far apart.

In estimating our attitude towards men of genius I found immediately that our experience is extremely limited by the comparative youth of public libraries. Such libraries have, in general, existed for less than ninety years: the appearance of genius is as old as writing itself. Nevertheless, it is possible to speculate and, as well as to ascertain the treatment of genius in the past, to estimate its fate in the future by simple means.

It must at once be made clear what debt we owe to literary genius: it seems probable that without it public libraries would not exist to-day in the form in which we know them. It was not to scientific and technological text-books that we owe the public library, but to the poets, dramatists, and novelists who filled the shelves of country houses in the Victorian era. The early libraries consisted of pure literature and antiquarian books to the exclusion of any but cheap or out-of-date volumes of practical interest. It is obvious that the Victorian conception of a library was restricted to the culture of the mind and that this conception was based on the product of genius throughout the preceding ages.

What, then, has been our attitude to men of genius? It has been

¹ A paper read at the A.A.L. Annual Meeting, Leicester, 25th May, 1938.

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based very much on the social standing of the genius himself. The production of works of genius is a full-time task for any man, and neither Milton in his Parliamentary secretaryship nor Alfred Austin in the service of the law found time for more than prosaic imagination. Genius, therefore, must either support itself on the proceeds of its work, or must have a private income. And how many men of genius have had private means—at least in the productive years of their lives? It would be pointless to tell to you, who already know the story, the age-long struggle of genius to keep alive during periods of universal neglect, or to point out the paradox of post-mortem reward of genius—often to mercenary collectors, publishers, and booksellers. It is usual, then, for genius to exist from hand-to-mouth with little or no financial aid or encouragement.

Where did men of genius live in the nineteenth century? Naturally, London was the mecca of artists, composers, and writers and they came to London in their thousands, thronging their respective Grub Streets. You can imagine them living in small bed-sitting-rooms let by indifferent landladies. It is well known that an artist keeps mentally alert by the exchange of artistic theories, and of course, unlike the French, we had in those days, as now, a poor and unsatisfactory substitute for the café in the public-house. There were, however, books on the theory of art in almost as great quantity as there are nowadays: how were our men of genius to obtain them? London, divided into a system of parish councils, had public libraries here and there, but, even supposing the artist to live in a district served by a public library, was he a borrower? I very much doubt it.

Rules and regulations in public libraries were more strict than they are to-day—can you imagine the illiterate landlady of Bloomsbury or Regent's Park consenting to sign her responsibility for her lodger? And even if she did so, can we expect that the artist long retained his membership? We are indebted for the regular habits and citizen-like behaviour of our present-day borrowers to the strict discipline of office and factory: a man who has to "clock in" at 9 o'clock, eat his lunch in exactly one hour, and catch the 5.55 back to Harrow takes easily to the rigid periods of loan and the methods of fines and renewal. Apart from the fact that many of our facilities for escaping fines did not exist in the nineteenth century, it is very likely that our artists, who slept through the morning and probably did not leave their lodgings until long after dark, found it impossible to conform to the irksome restrictions of the public libraries of their day.

I regret to say that I am forced to the conclusion that the artist, bowed

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down by the refusal of landladies unwilling to assume responsibility for them, the lack of public libraries, the restrictions enforced, and the general rarity of good book-stocks, found little help offered them by the London public library system of the nineteenth century. Nor were their country cousins in any better position, for county libraries did not exist and facilities for subscription were not usually granted by the neighbouring town libraries.

Has the position improved since the War? With the growth of ease of communication, London is no longer the only residence of genius. We have in Birmingham, for instance, a new school of novelists growing up; penurious men of letters and artists often elect to live in the country where their rents are lower than in the cities. But the character of genius has not changed; indeed, from dislike of the regimentation of industrial civilization the man of genius often deliberately assumes and easily retains the shiftless habits of his predecessors. For no apparent reasons he will change his lodging frequently, wander about the country freely, and in general make himself a law unto himself, to the great confusion and secret admiration of the city worker.

But to take London first: the landladies of Fulham are no more willing to sign forms for their lodgers than they were fifty years ago; and London libraries, in common with those of the provincial towns, retain the same periods of loan and scales of fines with very little modification. The man of genius, whom modern civilization keeps hard at work writing unnecessary letters of appeal to publishers, or tramping the streets presenting unwanted plays to indifferent stage managers or paintings to scornful Bond Street dealers, finds the public library closed by the time he returns to his lodgings. Fines which he can ill afford to pay mount automatically week by week, and overdues which we write in their hundreds without ill-feeling or thought of their effect create in him just another grievance against an over-mechanized civilization.

Nor is the position in the country very much better. It is true that county library centres rarely charge fines and that the periods of loan are much less defined. But to counterbalance this, the village centre rarely has the sort of book of which the artist is in urgent need. Of course, he may easily obtain it through the county library's postal service, but this procedure, apart from the initial filling in of forms and recommendations, necessitates both delay and expense (in the shape of cost of postage one way) and occasionally disappointment. The present parcel charges are so high

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that the artist can rarely afford the sixpence carriage for nearly every book he requires.

I am loth, too, to say that public libraries in England have never achieved that position of a literary home to men of genius which I consider desirable. Both Joyce in *The Portrait of an artist* and St. John Gogarty in *As I was going down Sackville Street* have described the important place which the National Library of Ireland (under the administration of a great librarian) assumed in the literary life of Dublin. Such a state of affairs would seem impossible in England, and no doubt my own regrets would weigh little with those of you who prefer business-like efficiency to the charm of a literary salon.

There is one further aspect to which I would draw your attention. Many of you must have seen a recent film of the life of Rembrandt where the artist's powers of production are vividly contrasted with his destitution; you may, too, have read a popular description of the life of Van Gogh by Irving Stone, from which we are persuaded that Van Gogh looked like a tramp and behaved in a way which did not conform to the accepted manner of the office worker. Examples such as these abound, and I am beginning to believe that these artists, even had they had the temerity to approach the doors of the public library, would, in all probability, have been eyed with suspicion—if not actually forbidden entrance by the library caretaker. In any case, since pride so often marches hand in hand with genius, it seems probable that very few such artists would risk covert or open insult by presenting themselves at our doors.

Nor has genius always shown itself capable of taking the care of books which we demand. You will recall that Wordsworth was observed to cut the unopened pages of a book with a buttery knife; and those of you who have read Christopher Isherwood's recent book, *Lions and shadows*, will remember that under a pseudonym a well-known poet is therein described as handling the author's books in such a way as would undoubtedly call for reproval had the books been the property of a public library.

Perhaps you will think that I have exaggerated the destitution of genius and the rigidity of the present library system; if I have done so, the destitution and rigidity which I have described are none the less in existence at the present day and as far as I can foresee will continue to remain as long as our present social system is in being. Moreover, we ourselves are part of the celebrated class of black-coat workers who, by reason of the necessary conventionality of our lives, sooner or later expect that conventionality

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to be present in our borrowers who, of course, may not feel that necessity with the same force. As an illustration of this I need hardly point out to you the innumerable examples of members of our profession who in their youth were men of outrageous political, artistic, and moral opinions but who later settled down as family men of unimpeachable opinions, morals, and habits, to the confounding of their hopeful juniors.

For my purpose I will assume—warrantably or not—that we do and can do little to serve the man of genius directly under our present social system. What then is our attitude to the works which these men produce? Here I come to what I regard as one of the supreme examples of the stupidity of the human race. We are all only too well acquainted with the persecution with which genius has met as long as the human race has existed. Nice old ladies and bearded connoisseurs find it difficult to believe that their favourite poet, artist, or composer was universally neglected in his lifetime. They bewail his early suicide or his old age spent in gradual starvation or in the workhouse and say: "If only somebody had recognized that this man was truly great!" And if they put their ideas into practice they go out and patronize some attractive tame artist of their own class who is willing to accept their charity. For the man of genius is often proud, very often disdainful, and nearly always unwilling to accept the unwanted advice, patronage, and interference which the old shower upon the young. And so works of extreme mediocrity crowd the market and the old story of neglected genius and the brown-paper copies of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyám is re-enacted for the sardonic amusement of the future social historian.

But this position has one new and important factor which should, but does not, play its part—the public library, which can become the modern patron and benefactor of genius without the opprobrium which attaches to the lion-tamers I have already mentioned. One of the most scathing criticisms of public libraries in the future will be their neglect of genius until it was recognized by the public. This neglect is based on our whole theory of book-selection, which teaches that books must be selected from reputable literary journals. And thus we follow, instead of leading, public opinion with regard to contemporary genius.

Reputable literary writers are, I fully believe, suspect from the start. These reviews are written by men of great academic standing or by journalists, and in either case the reviewers are ill-fitted to recognize genius except by accident. An academic training teaches one to appreciate the art of the past but gives little help in assessing the value of present-day productions.

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And how shall a hard-pressed journalist, reading a dozen or more books in a week in between intervals of his regular duties, assess the labour and striving of months or years? Consequently, when an author has "arrived" and bibliographies of his works are published it is small surprise to find that much of his early work appeared in obscure editions which were quickly remaindered or pulped; and an application to the Regional Library Bureaux will often reveal that not a single copy of these early editions is obtainable. It says little for the acumen of public librarians or their assistants.

Coupled with our sieve-like methods of book-selection is our overweening confidence in ourselves as men of letters and connoisseurs of art. Unless he is superhuman a librarian will usually find it difficult to divorce his private opinions on art and literature from his public views as a librarian. That, of course, is to be expected, but no attempt is made to correct this attitude and we often find shelves of poetry which stop short at the librarian's early 'twenties. Lest you should think this an exaggeration, I will quote you a recent and justly famous catalogue of non-fiction, which was published by a large public library system about three years ago, and which I have no doubt most of you have seen. This catalogue contains no works by Auden or Spender, Pound or Marianne Moore, and the stock of plays is in a similar bad way. Of course, this position has undoubtedly been rectified by now, but at the same time new poets have appeared who will as undoubtedly be unrepresented until their poems are published in anthologies and their voices are heard on the radio.

We are thus between the deep-blue sea of the unimportant opinions of hack-writers and the devil of our unjustified confidence in ourselves. If we know little about literature we know less about music and hardly anything about art. While many librarians would volunteer to estimate the worth of a poem or a novel, few would be competent to assess the importance of a new symphony or a surrealist painting. Our music, therefore, is crammed with the classics, and our books on art are strong with descriptions of Italian primitives and Japanese influences. Recently three books were borrowed through the Bureau by Colchester: one, a piano concerto by Busoni, was borrowed from Birmingham, 170 miles away; the second, Julien Levy's *Surrealism*, had to be purchased by the National Central Library and took six weeks to obtain from America; the third, Francis Carco's *Les innocents*, a novel published nineteen years ago, and since reprinted in thousands, came from Gateshead, 300 miles away. Not one of them was at that time obtainable in the South-Eastern Region. I dare

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not tell you of the books which were reported as impossible to obtain at all.

I am going to suggest, therefore, a course which I sincerely trust will shake the academic book-selector to his very marrow. I suggest that just as we turn to the technical journals for our books on alternating currents and electro-plating, that we turn to their true equivalents for our new poets and novelists. These are small, often badly printed journals, irregular in issue, short-lived—they are the manifestos, the "Little reviews" of literature to-day. How many libraries possess a complete file of *Story* or of *New verse*, of *Contemporary prose and verse*, or of *Minotaure*. But most of us can exhibit bound rows and rows of *Notes and queries*—the moral is yours!

These fugitive journals to which I refer are usually non-commercial; they are edited by creative artists in their spare time, or by critics of great ability; they are often sold at a loss, and very often their assumption by commercial firms marks a degradation in their standards of criticism: you will all recall past instances of this. But however great the trouble taken in obtaining these pamphlets, we are fully repaid by the information they contain. Discounting the backbiting which seems inevitable in any organized group of artists, their decisions and criticisms are worth your attention. They are the signposts to the great names of to-morrow—they are paving the way of the unfortunate artist of to-day! Let us accept their verdicts blindly and without question. That will not keep us from erring, but at least it will be on the right side.

With regard to music and art, book selection is even more difficult. The catalogues of Messrs. Zwemmer's, for instance, contain titles which are reviewed in no English journal. The very text of these books is probably in French, German, or Italian: yet they are essential to the student artist, who does not need to know foreign languages to appreciate colour reproductions whose like is rarely seen in any book printed in England. Here, then, we must rely on the skill and knowledge of the expert bookseller. Again, the exhibitions in London must be watched—important material is often published by art galleries which never reaches the lists in the *Book-seller*. How many libraries secured a copy of the magnificent monograph on Christopher Wood which the Redfern Galleries produced in connexion with an exhibition of his work this year? The same method must be followed with modern music: recitals in London and on the wireless should be followed up by enquiries as to copies of the works performed.

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Let us not wait until composers like Moeran and Hindemith are dead before we purchase their works.

Why should we take the trouble to follow this difficult and insecure method of book selection, and add books which we do not perhaps appreciate ourselves? It seems hardly worth it unless we remember both our debt to genius and to the public. To genius we owe our very existence: let us try to repay it by buying the productions of men of genius while they are still impoverished, which is the very period when they most need encouragement. Nor is our contribution negligible: libraries to-day can buy an edition of one thousand copies at least—no small number in the sales of a volume of poetry or an obscure sonata. And again we owe it to our public to select for them the works of genius which they have no time to hunt out for themselves. Our justification lies in these two reasons, and I consider them sufficient if we are to prove ourselves originators and not imitators in our own field.

Naturally you will ask, how shall we pay for this extra charge on our book-fund? It is not very difficult to discover the means. Every year a number of well-established novelists and men of travel publish pot-boilers—they get their modicum of praise from a literary press subsidized by advertisements of these very books. We recognize them at a glance—they are books of fashion whose popularity is fierce but quickly spent: let us forgo those that we buy at the moment. Publishers, too, have an increasing habit of producing symposiums and omnibuses of essays (by authors who have "arrived") on the subjects of the moment. The essays reach a certain mediocre standard, and again the reviews welcome this unnecessary addition to printed opinion. They are books which we can well do without. In neither case do we lose anything but a handful of books which are convenient landmarks for the assistant who is shelving: but their cost would more than pay for the slim, obscure, but important volumes which we so often miss at the present time.

Now I come to what I believe to be one of the main causes of our comparative neglect of unrecognized genius in England—our professional organization to-day. When English librarianship held its first conference in London in 1892 there were no professional examinations and little professional education of any kind. The librarians of those days were, many of them, recruited comparatively late in life, and their main qualification was that of being bookmen. The keenest of them were true bookmen in whom the organization of a library was an innate capacity, and under their guid-

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ance some of our greatest librarians of to-day developed their genius for librarianship. These librarians, however, felt that there was a need both for an association of libraries by which they could hope to accomplish so much more, and for a system of education by which the slower of their assistants in whom librarianship was not necessarily innate might learn the essentials of first-rate administration and routine. Thus there came into being the Library Association and its examinations, and soon there were professional journals which co-ordinated the knowledge and technique of the great administrators.

But we have now swung the pendulum to the other extreme and professional education comes first. Whilst condemning the educational system which sends us matriculants suffering from the effects of eight or so uncorrelated subjects, we immediately introduce them to what I cannot but regard as four or five years of misery, in which they spend their leisure hours studying for our extremely dull and technical examinations. This, too, when these juniors have spent all day in routine which may possibly have had little to do with the genius of librarianship which our predecessors wished to maintain. Small wonder is it that mediocre library systems abound, or that assistants should mis-spell Carlyle in the Examination room. I have met many assistants who repeatedly say: "What a lot of good books I'm going to read when I finish the Intermediate Examination!" Personally, I don't believe them—my own experience is that they turn instinctively to detective stories as a relief from the drudgery of our uninspiring code of cataloguing rules.

This system of affairs is one which was never intended by its originators and one which, moreover, is aggravated by two things. The first is our wealth of professional literature. Four national magazines are published every month, and another every quarter, in England alone. In addition the text-books advise you to read one or two American periodicals. Various regional and private periodicals also appear at intervals, and the spate of text-books is never-ending. At the same time, during every winter month there is usually a professional meeting within reasonable distance which we are encouraged to attend. But one curious fact is notable about both periodicals and meetings: books are in the background, and professional technique holds the field. Even when literature is discussed there is a marked ignorance of creative writers of to-day and little or no knowledge of foreign authors who have yet to be translated into English.

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The junior of to-day is reared in this unhealthy atmosphere: quite naturally he is discouraged from browsing when on duty, and again he is very often not allowed to study for his professional examinations during hours of duty. There is therefore little opportunity for gaining any knowledge of pure literature, of art, or of music during his most impressionable years, and perhaps under the new Syllabus there may be even less.

Here is a state of things which should and must be remedied if the essence of librarianship is to be universal instead of the exception. I am not going to suggest that every assistant should have two hours per day for study while on duty, or that we let every assistant read novels on counter. But if the library is well organized it should be possible to train the assistant in every branch of the syllabus without reference to textbooks, except for comparative purposes. The easiest and best way to pass an examination in cataloguing or classification is by spending a year in the department devoted to those subjects. The best way to learn administration is under the supervision of the librarian. All the tuition necessary can be accomplished more easily than by our tortuous system of technical college and correspondence courses, by a well-organized system of exchange between departments, between large and small public libraries, and between different types of libraries.

In our examinations too much emphasis is placed upon memory work and upon technique: little attention is paid to the supreme art—book selection. In the late-lamented 1938 Syllabus a new subject, "Library stock and assistance to readers," made its appearance. It was inadequate and it was another burden on the examinee, but it was a step in the right direction. A glance at Miss Graham's *Bookman's manual* (an American publication) will convince you of our shortcomings this side of the Atlantic.

Perhaps you may have felt that this paper has been to a certain extent disconnected, but I trust not—I feel that the connexion between all three parts is that knowledge of books which we revere in the true bookman. With regard to our attitude to men of genius I feel we can do little to better it unless we ourselves become unconventional, and that is not a course which I myself desire. The way of genius will always be harsh, and it is not within our power to become the oasis which we might desire, but it is as well to keep in mind the paradox of our relationship, which resembles too much that of the hospital that, built by a rich man, refused him entrance when he was poor, old, and diseased. However, with courage we may play our part and pay our tribute to men of genius by the purchase of their works

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and by introducing them to the public. It is a small payment for the legacy which genius in the past has left us in the shape of libraries which both keep us alive and enrich us all, if not in purse at least in mind.



Our Library

History of the legal deposit of books throughout the British Empire, by R. C. Barrington Partridge. Pp. xvii & 364. 1938. The Library Association. 18s. (A thesis approved for the Honours Diploma of the Library Association.)

UNDER the provisions of the Copyright Acts a copy of every book published must be sent to the British Museum and, on request, to the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, the National Library of Scotland, and the library of Trinity College, Dublin. The deposit of printed books in this country commenced in 1610, when an Agreement was entered into between Sir Thomas Bodley and the Stationers Company. The system of delivering a single copy of each new book to the Bodleian, originating from that Agreement, developed into a statutory obligation to deliver, at one time and to various institutions, as many as eleven copies. The obligation has been bitterly resented, and this book is a history of its evasion by the publishers on the one hand and of its enforcement by the libraries on the other. Mr. Partridge has written an intriguing work in which he takes the reader stage by stage through the "battle of the books." He deals, among other matters, with the delays and omissions in delivery, the revolt of the printers and publishers, the effects of the Copyright Acts of 1709, 1775, 1814, 1842, and 1911, the attempts to secure amending legislation, the campaigns of Brydges and Christian, and the work of Panizzi at the British Museum. The book is well written and throws light on a subject hitherto neglected. It makes a valuable contribution to the history of the great national libraries and, to some extent, of the Copyright Acts, although it is primarily a book for the layman. It is surprising that such a subject as compulsory delivery of books can be so interesting, and the author is to be congratulated on the compilation of a work which can be read with so much enjoyment as well as with profit.

The book is in three parts: Part I deals with the history of the subject in Great Britain and Ireland and forms the major portion of the work, Part II with the Dominions and India, while Part III is devoted to the

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Colonies, Protectorates, and Mandated Territories. An Appendix sets out *in extenso* the documents, statutes, reports, correspondence, etc., referred to throughout the work, and it forms a most valuable collection of papers. There are copious references to authorities. The Appendix of documents, list of authorities consulted, and the footnotes is evidence of the industry and care with which the book has been written. The index, unfortunately, is poor. The utility of the chronological list of documents would have been enhanced by the addition of page references, while the table of cases and "index" of statutes would have been improved if the page numbers had been more clearly set out. These shortcomings, however, do not detract from the value of the book and, as Sir Frederick Kenyon says in his preface, Mr. Partridge "has rendered a great service to literary history and to those interested in the production and dissemination of books by bringing together in a convenient volume a mass of information hitherto widely scattered and difficult of access."

A. R. H.

Valuations

R. L. W. COLLISON

IN the past the material available for review in Valuations has depended on the whim of librarians: some libraries have consistently forwarded items from time to time; other libraries whom we know to have been producing both annual reports and bulletins have never sent copies to the professional press. No systematic attempt, as far as I know, was made to rectify this, and Valuations was limited in scope and influence. The necessities of the student have, however, brought about a change in policy, and the A.A.L. Council now invites every library—county, municipal, university, or special—to send copies of their publications, but not necessarily for review. The Council wish to form a collection of good publicity material conforming to the best standards of printing and format: batches of reports and bulletins from this collection will be circulated to students by the Hon. Librarian, and by this means it is hoped to enable every student to inspect for himself some of the publicity work of the foremost library systems—large or small. Naturally it will take some time to get the scheme in working order, but we hope to issue the first batches of material during the autumn. In turn the increase of material will help Valuations, for much of the influence of a review is lost if the subject cannot be examined by the

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reader. Any of the following groups of publications will be welcome : (1) Annual reports ; (2) Monthly or quarterly bulletins ; (3) Handbooks of information and guidance ; (4) Special lists, printed or duplicated. They should be forwarded to me at the Central Public Library, Colchester, and if those items which are not for review are indicated, the stipulation will be strictly observed. American and colonial publications will, of course, be especially welcome.

And so we come to the question of standards. What are the criteria of a library publication ? Here are my own ideas on the subject, and I fully expect slaughter in the correspondence columns of the next ASSISTANT !

The type should be clear and dignified, but lacking in preciousness ; it need not be Gill unless the publication especially demands it—for instance, the small cinema folder which we use for monthly lists demands Gill Sans, since the type has at the same time to be small, readable, and attractive ; but an annual report in the same type is far too aggressive.

The paper should be suited to the purpose of the publication. A small folder must be tough to stand the strain of much use ; the same paper would be entirely unsuitable for an annual report. If there are illustrations the paper should either be of good quality and highly calendered, or the illustrations should be tipped in and the paper itself be of the antique-laid type.

Special regard must be given to format : monthly lists are of little value on quarto ; an annual report is unreadable on foolscap. The margins should be good but not excessive ; the use of rules and heavy type should be restricted as far as possible and eliminated completely if the nature of the matter allows it. The colour of the type should match that of the illustrations and graphs ; small caps and italics should be used for headings in preference to heavy type.

The layout of the title page and cover should err on the side of dignity rather than on that of advertisement. Some of the *avant-garde* libraries have turned the page upside down in their efforts to achieve originality : it is a pity, for the effective style of to-day is a fashion, but the title pages of Caxton and Frobenius are still fresh and still impressive. Advertisements should not be allowed to overwhelm the bulletin itself ; nor should they be for products which appear merely ludicrous in a library publication.

Colour is an important feature : the contrasting of type and paper by the intelligent choice of colours for both has yet to be explored by many librarians. As an example, Baskerville in green has a superb effect on a

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background of white. The selection of a suitable colour for a cover needs care and imagination, and the shade of white or cream chosen for the inside of the bulletin or report can be of great importance.

No doubt there still are many points of importance which I have not covered, and I hope that these will be pointed out: the formulation of standards for the preparation of printed matter is of utmost importance if the present rate of progress in library printing is to be maintained. But perhaps one of the greatest drawbacks to good printing to-day is the increasing use of the advertisement bulletin which is marketed by one or two firms for commercial purposes alone. These firms offer to supply so many thousand copies of a library bulletin each month or quarter free of charge if the library will allow them to insert a large number of local and national advertisements. Normally the advertisements swamp the bulletin material and, moreover, many of them are objectionable or merely boring. A few libraries, however, have managed to secure the cleaning up of both layout and advertisements—notably *Dover* and *Middlesbrough*. Let us hope other libraries who make use of this service will follow suit.

Stretford sends the best-produced annual report I have seen for a long time. Well printed by a local press, its layout is charming and the generous margins almost invite the pencilled comment. This library, serving a population of less than 70,000 with four separate libraries, a staff of twenty-two, a book and binding fund of nearly £2,200, and a total income of £7,000, must be one of the most prosperous systems in the country. A summary of progress during the last seven years shows how both work and staff have practically doubled, and the numerous activities and extension work which are mentioned in the body of the report undoubtedly warrant the enviable amount available for books. Incidentally, this library appears to have an astounding proportion of women assistants.

It is of interest to find that many libraries no longer print their statistics in the form recommended by the Library Association. A case in point is that of *Coulsdon and Purley*, whose second annual report gives analyses of borrowers by branch, detailed issues, statistics of inter-library loans, and book-stock. No financial statement is printed and comparison between book-fund, number of staff, and issues is impossible when the first two items are not given anywhere in the report. On the other hand, a map of the urban district, showing the density of readers, is interesting, and Mr. Callander is reasoned and unbiased in his discussion of the fall in number of readers (though not in issues) and of the existing and future provision of

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branches. One of the most remarkable features of the system is the number of reservations—17,000 in one year !

Libraries are in the background in the C.U.K.T.'s annual report, and apart from announcements of grants to one or two counties and to the N.C.L. and the Regional Bureaux there is little said about us. Small library authorities seem loth to relinquish their powers to the counties even when a grant is forthcoming from the Trust, but no doubt this suspicious attitude will remedy itself in time.

Efforts in duplication can look very good and sometimes very bad. *Sowerby Bridge*—according to my 1937 directory, a small Yorkshire system with a staff of two—sends some attractive leaflets in this medium. Among other lists there are a handbook for those leaving school, a cookery list to be distributed at the local gas showrooms, and a list on careers. *Canterbury University College, N.Z.*, issues a "Library record" of new additions. The contents are specialized and important, but the duplicating is not all that could be desired. *Doncaster* has produced a creditable map of Britain on the Roneo, and the brief title and author list of books on the various counties is well laid out, although the repetition of the long class-marks seems unnecessary. *Mitcham*, in connexion with a Co-operative Exhibition held recently, issued two very fine lists on The Ideal Home and Physical Fitness. Both wandered farther than their titles would strictly allow, but in such attempts to reach the non-library public, Jesuitry is justifiable. *Wrexham* sends an attractive duplicated bulletin, and the long list of Welsh books at the end makes at least one Southerner realize what very different types of public provincial libraries are serving.

With great care I have kept some of the best things until the end : *Bethnal Green*, who must be heartily tired of the bouquets handed out by the professional press, send "England's green and pleasant land" and "Holiday books." The former is not a list of guide books, but some carefully chosen "spirit of the soil" books—Beverley Nichols is *not* included. Delightfully printed in green on a yellow background, it contrasts greatly with "Holiday Books," a selection of half-forgotten books for all kinds of people. The choice is neither yours nor mine, but stretching from "Life's a lark," "Texts and pretexts," and "San Michele" to "The Dog beneath the skin," "Abinger harvest," and "Peter Warlock," it is a successful attempt to remind us of past favourites. As usual, the annotations are inimitable and bear their own unmistakable signature. I was disappointed with "Books of 1937" when I first saw it, but the arrangement under various broad

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headings with write-up articles beneath attracts with acquaintance, and my own regret is the lack of an index.

"Books for all," *Middlesex County's* bulletin, certainly deserves to have a larger audience than one county and could be used with success by the group of counties who are now circulating the County Library's Section co-operative lists. Long rambling articles on Hitler, Bellahouston, and England somehow manage to mention a large number of books, all good and many of them dusty and forgotten. In the centre there are illustrations of the extensions to the *Hayes Branch*, and those who knew this building before it was altered will admire the way in which the old section has been replanned in conjunction with the new. *Ruislip Manor* appears to have some very hard seats, but it is well lit and the shelves look inviting.



Correspondence

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNTY LIBRARIES,
HEREFORD.

THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

If he were not a "despairing county assistant," fearing not so much the sound of his own voice as the very real possibility of merely reiterating the obvious, one assistant at least would have liked to venture an opinion on the debatable value of the School Certificate and our system of training in general.

The writer's own conviction is that something more constructive should be attempted than arguing interminably about the undoubted futility of the School Certificate as a test of ability, the provision of text-books, the inadequacy of salaries, etc. Though spare-time study may be a rather glorious expression of a determination to succeed, it is my opinion that the results are far greater loss than gain; at a time when he should be "finding his feet" and forming opinions and relationships which will be of inestimable value at a later period, the student is forced to cut himself off from his fellows, and to torture his soul with the mastery of unresponsive text-books. (It is true that study can be quite tolerable and even interesting, if, as Mr. Halliday has advised, the text-books are made subservient to practice, but the "spoon-feeding" process employed in attaining School Certificate

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standard has endowed few with the ability to shut the book and think out the problem for themselves.)

As Mr. Lamb has made clear, any person engaged in library work is automatically considered to be "literary," and those who hold this belief are often shocked to learn that an assistant is unacquainted with many of the accepted classics. At the Summer School in Birmingham a year or so ago, we were discussing the inevitable examination question with that equally inevitable light-hearted fatalism, which, to my mind, does irreparable damage when communicated to new members of the profession, and nearly everyone acknowledged that they read to broaden their minds and for pleasure, *only between the long-drawn-out periods of study*; and though the fact remains that those who really desire to read will do so, study or no, it is a serious matter that budding librarians, whose job it is, or will be, to be practised in assessing the value of a book, are being hindered at the most formative period of their development. I think that with the system of training remaining as it is, a course of instruction in the attainment of a fine and impartial criticism would be of at least as great a value as being conversant, parrot-fashion, with the writers and dates of the literary masterpieces; more especially is this so with the growing use of subtle propaganda in literature. Apart from actual acquaintance with books, the library assistant will need to form opinions on all manner of matters, and it is essential that he should have unlimited opportunities of making contact with the ideas of his fellows; such contact, as is widely appreciated, is invaluable to the library too. He should be at home, also, in the many and widely divergent spheres of social life, so that he shall be aware of potential possibilities for the expansion of the service. What will assistants say if I assert that the great majority, and especially those who have made a success of their studies, are considered as rather "dull dogs," and are out of touch with the ideas of their fellows?

We arrive, then, at the problem of achieving a practical cum theoretical system of training, which will not encroach upon and hamper the development of the individual. With all man's knowledge in our charge, and a great opportunity to lead the field in modern methods of education, we should surely be able to hit upon some satisfactory solution. At present, with little experience to guide me, I conceive a system of combining the best of the methods by which elementary school teachers are trained, with a wider and much more practical application of the School of Librarianship idea. An entrant to the profession would first serve a year's apprentice-

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ship in making the practical acquaintance of methods employed in library work, and especially in being trained to criticize such methods—when he understood their meaning. What standard of recruitment to the profession should be set? Is it too much to expect a graduate to spend a year in a library at a nominal salary, and then to go on to the library school for two years, with later salary prospects as they are? Perhaps this method and an alternative by which suitable applicants would be taken straight from school would be best, although the latter would have to spend a correspondingly longer period at the library school to improve their standard of general knowledge to something approaching the university level. Training-school fees could be loaned and repaid over a set period, as is at present the practice in the teaching profession; the Library Association would be the obvious body to finance such loans, failing any change in the present control of libraries.

The form and location of the library training school would need careful consideration. Wide opportunities for practical work would be essential, and the ideal would be for the school to be worked actually hand-in-hand with a library system embodying as many as possible of the varied aspects of library work. The staff of the system would always contain a proportion of students engaged in applying and observing the use of classroom methods in the workshop, as is the practice, for instance, in agricultural colleges. Much might be learned from American library schools. An examination could be set at the end of the period of training, since it could be assumed with a fair degree of certainty that the student had really understood the application of his theoretical knowledge. In this connexion a method could well be borrowed from the training of teachers, whereby a report is made upon their practical work; such a report is said to weigh heavily, as it should, when the results of the written examination are arrived at. As is generally realized, it is obvious that if the training school is to be a profit and loss concern (or if not, for the sake of its reputation) it is eminently desirable that those who carry out the testing of the students should not be members of the school staff, but of an outside organization.

As a result of their leaving the school with a guaranteed and tested standard of efficiency, the students could be judged when making application for jobs by the possession of such desirable qualities as personality and initiative with the report on their practical work influencing, perhaps, the testimonial received from the Principal; at present the possession of the full qualifications of the Library Association is no sure guarantee of

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forcefulness and ability, but may merely reflect a greater ability for cramming. Since I have criticized, too, the wrong use of leisure, I must stress that while at college the student would be free to develop personal hobbies and interests, and to cultivate a discriminative taste in reading, while making valuable and lasting contacts with his fellow students, and with the public who, for a part of the time, he would be engaged in serving.

What of salaries when a satisfactory standard of training has been achieved, you may ask? The Library Association appears to be aiming at obtaining the necessary lever to use in the campaign for better conditions, by first ensuring a standard of education to justify such improvement. But would not support for a scheme on the lines mentioned above be a better method than vague and prolonged talk of reorganization, and obscure hints at an increased stiffness of the examination syllabus, either of which ideas are sufficient to drive an already harassed assistant, dazzled perhaps by the example of the teaching profession, to become a firm adherent of state control? Closer co-operation with NALGO in its campaign to better the position of the local government officer through Whitley Councils and the like, is deserving of attention.

I am conscious that this idea of a training school open to others besides graduates, yet intended to improve the general standard of education, while eliminating the bugbear of spare-time study and its attendant difficulties, requires expansion in detail, and that holes may easily be picked in it, but I put it forward for criticism in the hope that something may arise out of the ashes.

Yours faithfully,

R. E. RICHARDS.

CENTRAL LIBRARY,
READING.

5th August, 1938.

THE EDITOR,

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

That there should be some means of exchanging information relating to library publicity has been a wish often expressed in THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT. As no practical suggestion has ever been made, I venture to propose the trial of a "postal portfolio."

The scheme would work as follows: libraries would be invited to sub-

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mit descriptions of outstanding lectures and displays. This information should be typed on standard file-paper, on which could also be mounted photographs or sketches of posters, showcards, display stands, and similar accessories.

When a good collection has been made, the portfolio would be sent on its rounds, each library being responsible in turn for forwarding it to the next library on the mailing list. Comments and criticisms would be invited, this extra matter being inserted at the back of the file, and perhaps circulated later in another edition of the portfolio.

The cost of running such a scheme would be absurdly small; one or two quarto files; a few pence for stationery and photographs; and about ninepence per library for postage—hardly a dear price to pay for such a thorough exchange of ideas. There is also the possibility of using the portfolio as a kind of "mail-order catalogue" for inter-library loans of publicity material.

Yours faithfully,

R. J. LEE.

PADDINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY,
PORCHESTER ROAD, W.2.
24th June, 1938.

THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

Further to my letter on library text-books, in the June issue of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT, members of NALGO will be glad to know that at the recent NALGO Conference the rate of interest on loans for educational purposes has been reduced from 4 per cent. to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the latter to include all administrative and insurance charges.

Yours faithfully,

STANLEY H. HORROCKS.

The Library Assistant

New Members

CENTRAL.—T. S. Bruce (Greenock); A. G. MacKay (Midlothian County); Miss G. Williams (Conway).

Devon and Cornwall.—Miss L. Gurley (Newton Abbot); A. E. Hunt (Devon County); Miss F. Lowe (Paignton).

East Midlands.—E. N. Jackson (Derby County); Miss W. J. Kemp, Miss K. H. White (Boston).

Greater London.—R. A. Bangs (Hendon); I. D. H. Dawson (Cripplegate Institute); H. P. Denham (Watford); E. C. Durrant, Miss I. J. Ewin, Miss D. J. Gale, Miss H. Goslitski, A. W. Harrold, Miss E. M. Jowett (Hendon); C. W. Lambert (West Ham); Miss F. E. Mayes (Woolwich); C. P. Robertson (Middlesex County, Ruislip); Miss J. C. E. Rogers, Miss G. M. Skingle, Miss J. M. Spiers (Hendon); P. V. Spooner (Camberwell); D. Walden (Herts County, Boreham Wood); Miss E. Whitney (Croydon).

Kent.—Miss W. Elliott (Penge); Miss P. M. Hatch (Kent County, Redhill, Chislehurst).

Midland.—K. Rodbourn (Burton-on-Trent); R. H. Clark, R. H. Sitch (Birmingham).

North-Eastern.—A. Cameron (Durham County, Whickham); T. Gray (Carlisle); Miss E. Keeling (Blyth); Miss B. Laing (Stockton-on-Tees); Miss A. E. E. McDougle (Northumberland County); Miss A. Magaw (Durham County); E. D. Muffett (Durham University); Miss J. Parkinson (Gateshead); Miss D. Pearson (Durham County, Houghton-le-Spring).

North-Western.—S. Baguley (Lancs County, Kearsley); Miss E. J. Haydock (Lancs County, Urmston); Miss H. Harlow (Oldham); Miss D. Lawson (Metro-Vickers, Manchester); W. V. Fillingham, A. J. Haworth (Wigan); W. R. Hill (Lancs County, Prestwich); Miss J. Taylor (Wigan).

South-Eastern.—P. Flint (East Sussex County).

South-Western.—Miss V. K. Carter (Southampton).

Yorkshire.—Miss O. Hitchcock (Brighouse); Miss N. M. Hobson (Scarborough); H. Nichols (Leeds); Miss B. Peel (West Riding County); Miss M. Pryse (Rotherham); J. G. Rogers (Leeds); J. D. Spoue, Miss J. A. Turney (Rotherham); Miss M. Waite (Leeds); Miss C. Dibb, Miss K. M. Gibson (Bridlington); F. Hirst (Huddersfield).

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CORRECTIONS.—The name of J. G. Hilton (Lancs County, Standish) was wrongly given in the last list of new members as H. J. Gerard. P. S. Watkins (Richmond) should be P. S. Walkins. Miss E. M. Tood (Salford) should be Miss E. M. Todd.



The Divisions

DEVON AND CORNWALL

THE June meeting of the Division was held at Buckfast Abbey. Members were welcomed and entertained as guests of the Lord Abbot who, as author of some fifteen books of a specialized character, was still able to insist on the tolerance of public and other librarians when considering the provision of lighter forms of reading. He compared this class of work with the ephemeral productions of nature—something continually coming and going, but nevertheless very necessary and beautiful while existing. The Lord Abbot was thanked by the Chairman of the Division, Miss Daphne Drake, Librarian of the North Devon Athenæum, who appropriately referred to the meeting at Buckfast as at once a privilege and a pilgrimage for librarians.

The evening address was given by the Rev. Mark Strahl, O.S.B., Librarian of Buckfast Abbey, on the subject "The Book in manuscript."

A vote of thanks was moved by Mr. H. R. J. Boulter, Paignton County Branch Librarian, in which he expressed the appreciation of the Division as representing modern custodians of literature, for the speaker's most appropriate survey of what must continue to be a responsibility of, and heritage for, librarians.

The meeting concluded with an examination of some of the beautiful manuscript works produced by the monks of Buckfast.

The June issue of "Dacaal" was available at the close of the meeting. Any subscriber who has not received his or her copy should inform Mr. H. R. J. Boulter, Librarian, County Branch Library, Paignton.

NORTH-EASTERN

The summer meeting of the Division was held at Carlisle on Wednesday, 29th June, 1938, by kind invitation of the Chairman and Members of the Carlisle Public Library and Museum Committee.

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Some sixty members from all parts of the Division assembled in the Lending Library, where they were received by the Librarian (Mr. T. Gray, F.L.A.) and his staff, and shown round the new library, which was greatly admired, and the adjoining Museum at Tullie House.

Tea was taken in the Junior Library, where the Chairman of the Public Library and Museum Committee (Alderman J. C. Studholme) welcomed the Division on its first visit to Carlisle. Mr. W. M. Martin, F.L.A., Chairman of the Division, responded and expressed thanks to all who had contributed towards the success of the meeting.

After a tour of the historic Castle and Cathedral under expert guidance, the members left for their various destinations, and another most successful and enjoyable gathering came to an end.

NORTH-WESTERN

More than 100 members of the North-Western Branch of the L.A. and the North-Western Division of the A.A.L. visited Altrincham on Wednesday, 6th July, for the summer meeting. After an inspection of the Central Library and Art Gallery, delegates were given an official welcome by His Worship the Mayor (the Right Hon. the Earl of Stamford, Deputy Lieutenant of the County Palatine of Chester).

The business meeting was presided over by the President of the Branch (Mr. Charles Nowell), who expressed the appreciation of the delegates for His Lordship's memorable welcome. Immediately after the close of the meeting, at which no papers were read, delegates were conveyed in motor coaches to the Altrincham works of Linotype & Machinery Ltd., where they made a tour of the shops, which proved of real professional interest.

Delegates were entertained to tea in the Stamford Hall by the Mayor and Corporation, the Mayor presiding, and he was accompanied by his mother, the Countess of Stamford. Very cordial thanks to the Mayor and Corporation, the Chief Librarian and Curator (Mr. W. G. Bosworth) and his staff, and the Directors of Linotype & Machinery Ltd. were expressed by Mr. Charles Nowell. The Stamford Hall was charmingly decorated florally with the colours of the Corporation, and some of the handsome civic plate was used for the top table.

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